

halfpenny song on which he could lay his hands ; if only it was decent, and a genuine, undoubted, poem of the people/ ¹ In the same way Macaulay read every ballad or satire he could come across which was produced in the reigns of James or William. He had access to considerable collections of broadside ballads and used them all. There was first of all the great collection of 1,800 ballads formed by Pepys, which is particularly rich in ballads of those two reigns. In a footnote he acknowledges most gratefully the kind and liberal manner in which the Master and Vicemaster of Magdalene College, Cambridge, gave me access to the valuable collections of Pepys/² There was the Roxburghe collection of ballads in the British Museum, since reprinted in the publications of the Ballad Society, but then little known and unindexed.³ There was also ^f an excellent collection formed by Mr. Richard Heber, and now the property of Mr. Broderip, by whom it was kindly lent to me/ ⁴

All these were collections of the original broadsides, but Macaulay also quotes and systematically employs the printed collection of satires and political songs published at the beginning of Queen Anne's reign, in four volumes, and known as Poems on Affairs of State. And, finally, he consulted and used a considerable number of manuscript

libels and lampoons. He does not state where he found them—probably in the British Museum ; but there are also similar collections in the Bodleian, in other libraries, and in private hands.

The question to be considered here is what the precise value of evidence of this kind is for historical purposes.

Macaulay has sometimes been accused of over-estimating

¹ Life, ii. 94.

* I, 278, n. (iii).

³ Ibid.

* HI, 1358, n. (xi).